

determining that the target station is of the same protocol if the target station responds to the transmitted “K1” byte.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 7, wherein performing associated switching operations comprises:

transmitting a switching request signal from the source station to the target station upon detection of the SF;

transmitting a reverse request signal to the source station from the target station in response to the switching request signal;

performing the associated switching operation by the source station upon receiving the reverse request signal and transmitting a source switching notification signal to the target station; and

upon receiving the switching notification signal at the target station, performing the associated switching operation in a manner identical to the source station, and transmitting a target switching notification signal to the source station.

transmitting a target switching notification signal from the target station to the source station and performing the switching operation from a working side of the target station to a protection side thereof, the protection side being in a standby mode.

15. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein determining whether the target station uses the same protocol comprises:

defining a "K1" byte at the source station, the "K1" byte being unused, and transmitting the resulting "K1" byte to the target station; and

determining that the target station is of the same system type if the target station responds to the transmitted "K1" byte signal within a prescribed period of time.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein performing associated switching operations comprises:

transmitting a switching request signal from the source station to the target station upon detection of the new SF;

transmitting a reverse request signal from the target station to the source station in response to the switching request signal;